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Agenda item 20

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

Note verbale dated 10 February 1994 from the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights and, with reference to its previous note No. 27, of 13 January 1994, has the honour to enclose herewith, once again, documents prepared by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia entitled "The destruction of Serbian Orthodox Churches in the territory of the Former Yugoslav Federal Unit of Croatia"; and "The destruction of Serbian Orthodox Churches in the territory of the former Yugoslav Federal Unit of Bosnia and Herzegovina' with the request that these be circulated as an official document of the fiftieth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 20.

GE.94-11010

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs

Excellency,

Deeply alarmed by the activities carried out in the Republic of Croatia with the aim of exterminating the Serb people in the region in violation of the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, I have informed the competent bodies and commissions of the United Nations, as well as other international fora, about mass murders of Serbs, destruction of many Serb settlements and the ethnic cleansing of towns and villages with the mixed population (Zagreb, Osijek, Vinkovci, Novska, Slavonska Požega, Karlovac, Sisak, Varaždin, Daruvar, Virovitica, Bjelovar, Dubrovnik, Šibenik, Zadar and others, in some of which Serbs accounted for up to 41 per cent of the overall population, have now become almost ethnically "pure Croatian towns").

The aim of the activities of the Croatian authorities is not only the ethnic cleansing and the expulsion of Serbs from their ancestral homes. The totalitarian Croatian authorities have made very effort to remove all traces of the centuries-old life and culture of Serbs in the territory within the present-day Republic of Croatia. These activities of the Croatian Government and its subordinate organs, carried out in contravention not only of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, but also of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, are manifested in particular in their attempts to remove the traces of the centuries-old presence and activity of the Serbian Orthodox Church in this territory and to prevent its further work. The following information is the best evidence of such intentions of the Croatian Government:

1. Situation in Serbian Orthodox Church eparchies

Churches and Bishop's residences have been either dynamited, burned down or damaged in each of the five eparchies of the Serbian Orthodox Church, established in the territory of the former Yugoslav federal unit of Croatia. The damage, extensive everywhere, varies from eparchy to eparchy. The following information on the level of destruction in its eparchies in Croatia has been supplied by the Serbian Orthodox Church and confirmed by the EC Monitoring Mission:

a) Eparchy of Dalmatia

a.1) 13 churches demolished

a.2) 15 churches heavily damaged, 4 residences, one monastery and two chapels damaged and two cemeteries demolished.

His Excellency
Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

b) Eparchy of Zagreb and Ljubljana

b.1) 9 churches demolished

b.2) 25 churches heavily damaged

b.3) residence of the Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubljana in Zagreb dynamited, 5 residences demolished and 4 residences, two chapels and a church museum damaged.

c) Eparchy of Gornji Karlovac

c.1) 5 churches demolished

c.2) 19 churches damaged, 3 residences demolished and 7 damaged 5 cemeteries demolished.

d) Eparchy of Slavonia

d.1) 31 churches demolished

d.2) 15 churches heavily damaged

d.3) the Bishop's residence in Pakrac demolished and looted, 2 monasteries damaged, 20 residences and other ecclesiastical establishment demolished. Out of them, 13 establishments have been dynamited and 7 burned down, 5 chapels have been demolished and 7 residences, 7 chapels and two cemeteries damaged.

183 Serb villages have been destroyed and 10 towns ethnically cleansed in the Eparchy of Slavonia.

e) Eparchy of Osijek and Polje and Baranja

e.1) 12 churches demolished

e.2) 21 churches heavily damaged, 6 residences dynamited and 8 damaged 3 chapels demolished and 2 damaged; 2 cemeteries demolished and 1 damaged.

2. Destruction of important cultural and historic monuments

The cultural and historic heritage of the Serb people, protected as the cultural heritage of major importance, has been destroyed with the knowledge and participation of the Croatian authorities, out of which I point to the following

a) log churches at Rastovac built in 1700 and at Donja Račanica built in 1709 burned down;

b) The Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Zagreb, with exhibits from 13th to 19th centuries dynamited;

c) The Bishopric Library, founded by the Serb Patriarch Arsenije Čarnojević in 1690, in Pakrac has been looted. The library housed invaluable cultural assets which made it the most prestigious library of the Serb people.

The intention of the Croatian authorities to ethnically cleanse the Serb historical and ethnic territories and to eliminate the traces of the centuries-long existence of Serbs in these territories is evinced also by the fact that about 70 per cent of the demolished or damaged ecclesiastical establishments are located outside combat zones, some of them over 50 km away from the frontline (Pula, Rijeka, Zagreb). The Croatian Army displayed singular insensitivity toward the Serbian Orthodox Church in the village of Kušanci, the birthplace of the present Serbian Patriarch Pavle. The Croatian authorities have also expelled the Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church from Croatia and did everything to prevent their return. To that effect, they dynamited or demolished all Bishops' residences and cathedral churches, including those in Pakrac, the hub of

Serbian spiritual life in Western Slavonia, Osijek, Karlovac and elsewhere. In a word, everywhere in the territory of the former Yugoslav federal unit of Croatia where the Serb people offered no resistance (in ethnically mixed communities) or where it expressed allegiance to the new Croatian authorities, the Serb people has been the victim of genocide. History has repeated itself, the ignominious policy of Mile Budak, Minister in Pavelić's quisling Government of the so-called Independent State of Croatia during World War Two, has risen its ugly head all over again: Serbs are to be killed, expelled or converted into Catholicism. An important street in Zagreb has been recently renamed after Budak, while surviving Ustasha war criminals from World War Two have found their place in the Croatian Sabor, Government and diplomacy.

Confident that the United Nations and the international community as a whole will not turn a blind eye to these gross violations of the rights of the Serb people in a United Nations member State, carried out in blatant disregard of the fundamental principles of international law, I trust and believe that Your Excellency will take appropriate measures, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to prevent the ethnic cleansing and the destruction of the establishments of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the cultural heritage of the Serb people in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Vladislav Jovanović

(signed)

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
MONITOR MISSION TO YUGOSLAVIA
REGIONAL CENTRE BELGRADE

7 November 1992

From: ECMM Regional Centre Belgrade

To: His Beatitude Bishop Lukijan

The results of the investigation following your inquiry done by an ECMM team

A. Oblakovac - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

B. Vučjak Čačavački - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

C. Jaminovac - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

D. Kujnik - very house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

E. Orljavac - all Serb houses destroyed, only Croat residents remain

F. Crljenci - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

G. Sloboština - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

H. Milivojevci - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

I. Podarača - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

J. Vranić - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

K. Nježić - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

L. Požeški - there are many villages with the second part of the name Požeški, clarification is required

M. Markovac - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

M. Klisa - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

O. Odžakovci - very house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

P. Poljanska - village in relatively good shape, about 12 houses destroyed

G. Kantrovci - every house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

R. Gornji Vrhovci - very house destroyed, no inhabitants remain

S. Lučinci - most of Serbs have returned to village and 2 families who now live in Požega return to work on farm. There are very few damaged houses and Croat and Serb residents live in harmony, 3 Muslim refugee families have moved into village from Bosnia.

A. Šnjegovci - We were unable to visit this village as the road to the village was blocked. We suspect that this village has also been destroyed.

B. Oljasi - The parish house has been considerably damaged but not completely destroyed. It could be repaired.

C. Smoljanovci - Although the bell tower is still standing all houses in the village have been destroyed and no inhabitants remain.

3. Response to paragraph six:

A. Treštanovci - the orthodox priest Vojislav Blagojević left his parish voluntarily about 17 August 92 and returned to his native town in Bosnia. His wife and children returned to Serbia prior to the priest leaving. Discussion with villagers indicate that approximately 70 percent of village is Serbian and they live in complete harmony with Croat neighbours.

The orthodox priest in Treštanovci Vojislav Blagojević left his home after all his villages in his parish were destroyed and people left them.

B. Jakšić - the village now contains population of 25-28 percent Serbs, 10 percent Muslim/Albanian and the remained Croat. The houses that are blown are those of people that have left the village. Conditions are 100 percent better now than before the war and the people went to live in harmony. Although there are no Serbs serving on the council there were two until just recently. There are a small number of Serbs that would be willing to change houses with Croats living in Vojvodina.

A. Gradište - the church is standing and is undamaged although the parish house has been destroyed as well as seven other houses in the village. There are 22 empty houses in the village and 20 houses occupied with elderly residents. The village population consists of 95 percent Serb and approximately 5 percent Croat. The village is peaceful and there have been no provocations for four months. Three families in the village have sons but also are living peacefully in the village.

B. Letisevac - The Church has not been harmed by the war but it does show signs of damage and requires normal maintenance. The population of the village is 70 percent Serb and 30 percent Croat. There are no blown houses and rest of the people that remain in the village are elderly. There was no fighting in this village during the war and all the residents live in harmony.

C. Ciglanik - three houses have been blown and three houses burned with the last house blown in August and the last provocation was about mid October with rifle fire through a window in one house. The residents of the village are afraid and some would like to exchange houses but have not the proper papers to do so.

D. Kula - sixty percent of the village have changed houses and the thirty five percent of those remaining are old. There are nine Serbs that have a position of the village committee and the village appears peaceful. There is some attempt to change the name of the village to Hrtkovci.

A. Crkveni Vrhovci - the church was destroyed on 3 June 1992 and only the tower remains standing and appears to be in good shape. All Serb inhabitants have remained in village and are well with only very minor provocations reported. The residents would like to rebuild church but do not have the money to do so.

FROM: EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MONITOR MISSION
REGIONAL CENTRE - BELGRADE
TO: ARCHDEACON RAKIC
DATE: 27.8.1992
SUBJECT: CHURCHES IN CROATIA
REF: YOUR LETTER OF 29TH JULY 1992

HEREWITH IS AN INTERIM VERBATIM REPORT FROM OUR PEOPLE IN NASICE ON THIS MATTER. WE HOPE TO HAVE MORE LATER.

1. BUDIMICI/BELA LOZA

1.1 BUDIMICI: CHURCH IS LIGHTLY DAMAGED. HOUSE OF THE PRIEST STILL IN GOOD CONDITION. AROUND FIVE HOUSES HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP. ABOUT 60 MEN ARE IN JAIL AWAITING TRIAL FOR ILLEGAL OWNERSHIP OF WEAPONS. MORALE IS GOOD.

1.2 BELA LOZA: SITUATION IS RELATIVELY QUIET. NO HOUSES BLOWN UP. A FEW TRACTORS WERE STOLEN IN JULY.

2. PODRAVSKA SLATINA: PRIEST WAS PRESENT WITH HIS WIFE DURING THE MEETING. 100 FAMILIES HAVE LEFT THE TOWN SINCE 1991. ABOUT 10 FAMILIES EACH MONTH FOR THE LAST THREE MONTHS HAVE DEPARTED AS OPPORTUNITIES TO EXCHANGE PROPERTIES WITH CROATS HAVE ARISEN. THE PRIEST ENCOURAGES THESE DEPARTURES BUT IS NOT REALLY HAPPY ABOUT IT. AROUND 300 HOUSES HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP SINCE LAST YEAR.

3. VIROVITICA: SITUATION REMAINS TENSE. TERRORISTS ARE FEW BECAUSE OF DISTANCE FROM FRONT LINE. SOME HOUSES HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET ACCURATE INFORMATION.

4. DICELKA: PRIEST DEPARTED WHEN HIS HOUSE WAS BLOWN UP. THE PEOPLE ARE IN GOOD CONDITION BUT THE SITUATION REMAINS TENSE.

5. GRADINA: SOME HOUSES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BUT THERE ARE SERBS STILL LIVING IN THE TOWN.

6. GACISTE: 50% SERB/CROAT. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITIES ARE STABLE AT PRESENT. FEW HOUSES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED. THE LAST ONE WAS BLOWN UP 8 WEEKS AGO.

7. SOKOLAC: 3 HOUSES BLOWN UP. PEOPLE SEEN TO BE LIVING NORMALLY BUT SOME SERBS HAVE DEPARTED. THREAT IS LOW.

8. GORNJI MIHOLJAC: SITUATION IS STILL VERY TENSE. THREAT FROM EXTREMISTS WHICH POLICE ARE TRYING TO DEAL WITH. PRIEST IS LIVING ELSEWHERE AFTER HIS HOUSE WAS BLOWN UP ON 18TH JULY AND IS STILL RECEIVING THREATS.

GENERALLY THE SITUATION IS DECREASED AS TENSE FOR THE SERBIAN PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE NASCICE COMMUNITY.

WE HOPE THIS RATHER SCANTY INFORMATION IS OF HELP. MORE WILL FOLLOW IN DUE COURSE.

THE BEST WISHES
MICHAEL SHUTTLEWORTH

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA
Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs

Belgrade, 14 December 1993

Excellency,

In certain regions of former Yugoslav federal unit of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the process of ethnic cleansing of Serbs and destruction of their spiritual and cultural heritage is taking place. Such activities of the Croatian and Moslem armed forces are in contravention of the international conventions on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and on the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

I Religious Establishments Destroyed or Damaged in the Eparchies of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Former Bosnia-Herzegovina

1. The Eparchy of Banja Luka (seat in Banja Luka)
a. 1 Orthodox church demolished
2. The Eparchy of Bihać and Petrovac (seat in Petrovac)
a. 5 churches demolished
b. 2 churches damaged
c. 1 parochial home burned down and 1 charnel house dynamited
3. The Eparchy of Dabar and Bosnia (seat in Sarajevo)
a. 10 churches demolished
b. 12 churches damaged

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United Nations
New York, N.Y. 10017

c. 7 parochial homes demolished, 1 chapel damaged and 2 demolished and the Eparchy seat destroyed.

4. The Eparchy of Zahumlje and Herzegovina (the oldest eparchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church, established by St. Sava in 1219 with the seat in Hum, now in Mostar)

a. 24 churches demolished

b. 16 churches damaged

c. 1 monastery demolished, 2 bishop's residences dynamited, 2 parochial homes and 1 chapel demolished, 2 chapels damaged and 5 cemeteries destroyed and 5 damaged.

The Serbs, with Moslems the most populous in the region, were brutally expelled from Mostar and its surroundings. This ethnic cleansing was carried out jointly by Croats and Moslems. The world media and the international community turned a blind eye to this horrendous crime against the Serb population of Mostar and its surroundings, stoking thus the violent clashes between Moslems and Croats for the control of the town. In these clashes, Croats destroyed the Old Bridge over the Neretva River erected in the 16th century by Turks with the labour of enslaved Serbs.

5. The Eparchy of Zvornik and Tuzla (seat in Tuzla)

a. 32 churches demolished

b. 26 churches damaged

c. 20 parochial homes demolished, the seat, Bishop's Residence and 8 parochial homes damaged, 1 chapel and 2 cemeteries demolished.

II Destruction of Historical and Cultural Monuments of the Serb People

The following cultural and historical monuments were destroyed:

1. The old Orthodox church in Mostar built in the 16th century.

2. The cathedral church in Mostar built in 1873, one of the biggest churches in the Serb Patriarchate, with exceptionally valuable items. Shelled on 7 and 8 June 1992, its belfry was destroyed and its interior burned down on 15 June. Subsequently, the church was dynamited and razed to the ground.

3. The Monastery of Žitomislić (in the Eparchy of Zahumlje and Herzegovina), built in 1563, was burned and destroyed on 15 July 1992. This Monastery had been damaged also in World War Two and its monks killed by Croatian Ustashe, forerunners of the present Tudjman regime.

4. The Church of St. George at Kopači (in the Eparchy of Dabar and Bosnia), built by Herceg Stjepan in 1446, was looted and burned down by the Moslem armed forces of Alija Izetbegovic, while the adjacent cemetery was ploughed over.

5. Croatian armed forces established their bivouac in the monastery at Zavala, built in the 15th century. They desecrated and damaged this unique spiritual and cultural monument of the Serb people with frescoes dating back to 1690, just as they desecrated and damaged the Serb Orthodox church in Dubrovnik in which they set up their quarters on 2 October 1992.

6. The charnel houses at Prebilovci, Veličani and Livno, with the remains of the Serbs brutally killed by Croatian Ustashe and the Moslem Hanjar Division in World War Two have been dynamited or burned down.

III Perpetrators, Time and Manner of Destruction

The perpetrators of these acts were the armed forces of Bosnian Croats and Moslems and the units of the regular army of Croatia. These crimes were committed also at the beginning of the civil war while Tudjman's Croatia and its acolytes Bosnian Croats and Alija Izetbegović's Moslems, were still great allies and very hard at work dynamiting, burning down and ploughing over Serbs spiritual and cultural monuments dating back to the medieval times in a vain attempt to erase the evidence of their centuries-old presence in these lands.

Convinced of the need that it is necessary to invest every effort to bring about peace and protect the life and dignity of every man and woman and the right to life and comprehensive development of every people, I trust and believe that the Serb people will also be granted the same rights and protection before the international community and its fora.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Sgd.) Vladislav Jovanović